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THE RECENT COMMEMORATION AT OXFORD.

THE University of Oxford has nothing that exactly corresponds to the American college commencement. "Degree days," on which the successful undergraduates are raised to the baccalaureate rank, occur two or three times each term of the year, and while they are most quaint and interesting, they are hardly of a spectacular order and do not call together a large concourse of admiring relatives and sight-seers. The occasion which most nearly assumes the place of importance occupied each June by the American gala day is one connected with the exercises of "commemoration" week. Of all the attractive festivities that occur during this period, the chief event is always the "Encænïa," or gathering in the Sheldonian Theater, when the honorary degrees are conferred, the public oration is delivered, and the prize compositions are recited. Enthusiasm is then at its fever heat. Even the most staid Briton unbends. Many of the most prominent educators, churchmen, nobility, and public men, from various parts of the united empire and elsewhere, are present, and enter, as far as their rank and dignity will permit them, into the spirit of the occasion. The undergraduates, gathered in the upper balcony, are especially in evidence, and add a spice to the solemnity of the occasion which dispels forever from any American's mind the doubt as to whether our English brethren really possess a sense of humor. The propriety of ridiculing the brightest and most famous minds in the realm may be questioned, but the keenness of wit and pointedness of humor displayed, can never be doubted. Of course a Yankee finds the occasion interesting.



LORD GOSCHEN CHANCELLOR OF OXFORD UNIVERSITY.

Encænïa has naturally come to be known as "commemoration" *par excellence*. The public examinations, lectures, sermons, dramatics, concerts, balls, receptions, debates, cricket matches, dinners, and other functions which fill in the time from Wednesday to Wednesday, and each of which has its own interest and *côterie* all sink into insignificance in comparison with this culminating event. They seem rather to lead up to it or serve as a background.

Although close up to the borders of Scotland until twenty-four hours before the gathering, the writer felt that he could not afford to leave England without having witnessed an Encænïa, especially this year when one of such unusual significance was to occur. Accordingly, he made a flying trip, traversing most of England, to the scene of the festivities. Through letters to one of the higher officials, he was fortunate enough to be admitted at the eleventh hour.

The Sheldonian Theater, though holding some three thousand persons and crowded to the roof and doors, is entirely inadequate for an occasion of this kind. Possibly this limitation to the select, however, is not so objectionable to the Briton as it would be to us. A special effort is made to have the exercises somewhat exclusive and take away all appearance of cheapness. Most of the other gatherings and functions at Oxford are largely public and access is ready enough. Programs and other accessories are often hawked about the place of meeting. But at Encænïa, within the sacred environs of the Sheldonian, arrangements are quite different. No one is admitted save by presenting his ticket to the "proproctors" on duty at the various gates, and a vender of programs would be speedily arrested in his career.

The Sheldonian Theater was built by Christopher Wren in 1664-69 through the generosity of Archbishop Sheldon, and is redolent with the history of the university. Its ceiling has been decorated by the court artist of Charles II. with an allegorical painting which represents the triumph of Religion, the Arts, and the Sciences over Envy, Rapine, and Ignorance, and its walls are largely hung with the portraits of kings, queens, and emperors of the past. As the great doors swing open to admit the procession of dignitaries, a deep hush falls upon the audience, and a feeling of awe and expectancy involuntarily creeps over all. If an army of ghostly knights or a throng of crusaders

were to ride into the room, one feels as if it would occasion but little surprise. The spirit of all the centuries is here.

The floor of the Sheldonian is called the "area" and seems to be practically a survival of "the pit" in the old English theaters. It contains no seats, however, and is occupied by old graduates and a few outsiders of lesser note. Up the middle of it, in an aisle which has been carefully roped off, the procession marches to the semi-



EXTERIOR OF THE SHELDONIAN THEATER, OXFORD UNIVERSITY.

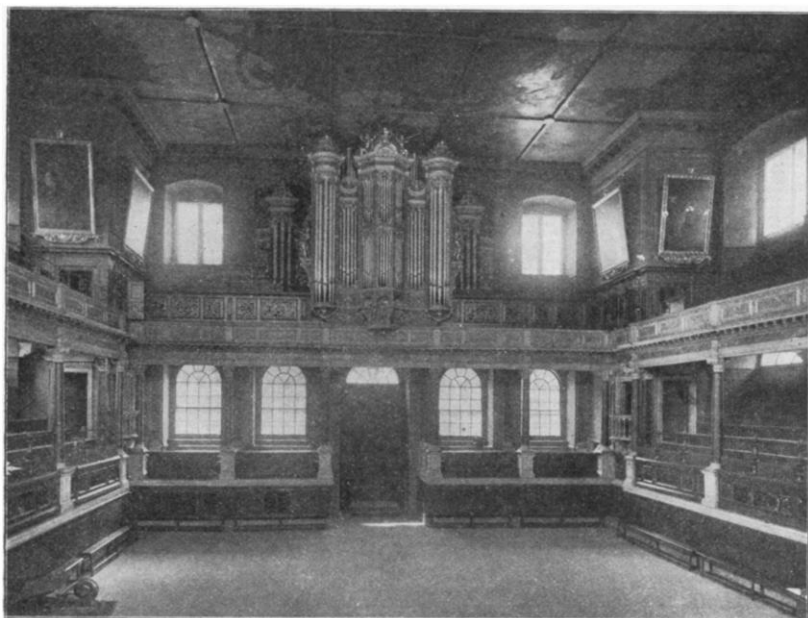
circular platform at the front. In the first gallery are seated the ladies, decked in gala attire, and with them are such distinguished visitors as can gain admission. The balcony above was formerly given over to the undergraduates, but during the last few years they have gradually been crowded out or scattered by the large number of ladies who have been granted tickets for this portion of the house. It is generally believed that the authorities have accomplished this separation in the hope of gradually breaking up a custom which they feel to be entirely out of harmony with the occasion, but which has been established too long to be at once abolished.

The inability of the undergraduates to concentrate their strength does not, however, altogether keep them from enlivening the proceedings, nor cause them to refrain from expressing a rather candid opinion of the recipients of the honorary degrees, although their audacity is now somewhat repressed. Some years since, one youth inquired of a dusky Rajah of India, when he was presented for his degree, "Good morning, have *you* used Pears' soap?" and the great Tennyson was mortally offended with Oxford to the end of his days because a student, referring to the poet's tumbled hair, innocently asked: "Did your mother call you *early*, Alfred dear?" While no shaft quite so barbed as these was sped at the recent Encænïa, the exercises were not allowed to grow dull. "Speak up, sir," or, "Have you tried a megaphone?" or, "Oh, cut it s-h-o-r-t!" were some of the admonitions that were rather aptly, but very impolitely, given to the professor who presented the recipients of the doctorate in literature. One wag even went so far as to drone out an "a-men" after the seeming dreary "patter" of one of the other presenters. Even the chancellor, who is most popular with the students, but who at times seemed a little uncertain about his Latin, was promptly corrected or informed "That's right," by the occupants of the "rogues' gallery."

On the other hand, the frank admiration of the undergraduates for certain heroes, scientific men, or *littérateurs*, and especially for the new chancellor, was fully as boisterous and even more delightful. Their approval is felt to be most genuine. Five years ago occurred an event which proved this conclusively. Lord Kitchener and Cecil Rhodes, before they had the slightest idea that their names were to be associated in the South African war, were, by a strange chance, to be presented for the doctorate at the same Encænïa. It was rumored that Rhodes was likely to be publicly vetoed by one or the other of the "proctors," and sentiment generally seemed against him. While Kitchener appeared happy and smiling, amid universal applause, Rhodes looked nervous and apprehensive, and advanced nearly one-third of the way toward the platform without receiving a sound of approval. Just at this juncture some of the students yelled from the top gallery, "Rhodes! Rhodes!" and the cry was taken up by their comrades and echoed throughout the house. The day was saved for Rhodes—and perhaps for Oxford, it would seem. That

night Cecil Rhodes signed his will, leaving half a million dollars for the extension and improvement of Oriel College, and more than ten times that amount for the now well-known series of scholarships.

The commemoration exercises at Oxford were rendered especially eventful this year by the installation of Lord Goschen as chancellor of the university. This office, as it is conducted at Oxford and



INTERIOR OF THE SHELDONIAN THEATER, OXFORD UNIVERSITY.

Cambridge, to an American seems a singular one. The conception of the head of a university who does not shape its policy, or come in contact with the institution in any way, except at commencement or on other state occasions, would appear absurd to a people with our academic traditions. Such a phenomenon occurred for a few years at Columbia College almost a century ago, and was attended with most disastrous results. But there are, as one would expect, excellent historic reasons for the government that has now been in vogue at Oxford and Cambridge for a matter of some centuries.

The office of chancellor—and even some of our American colleges

have borrowed the name without the method of government—has come down to England from the days of a united Catholic church. In the Middle Ages each diocese had a chancellor, who was at first merely a sort of secretary. He kept the seal, records, and library, wrote the letters, and incidentally managed the school of each cathedral chapter. As education began to spread during the eleventh century, it became more and more necessary for the chancellor to license other teachers for the diocese beside himself. From this use of a diploma giving the right to become a “master,” in the literal scholastic sense of the word, eventually developed the degree system of the universities and even the universities themselves. When the Guild of Masters was transplanted from Paris to Oxford, the chancellorship was also preserved, although that officer was not connected with a cathedral church or at first even technically under the jurisdiction of any bishop. As a matter of course, the bishops strenuously objected to the independence of the chancellor, but in the end such an order of affairs prevailed. This primacy of the chancellor within the university has now been recognized at Oxford for some hundreds of years, and it was only in keeping with precedent that at the recent commemoration the bishop of Oxford walked alone in the procession some distance after the chancellor and his pages.

Just at first the chancellor of Oxford or Cambridge was the real active head of the university, and performed all the duties of the office, while the vice-chancellor was merely his deputy. But by the fifteenth century, as the sovereign undermined more and more the autonomy of the universities, it became necessary to have some powerful friend at court, and the custom grew up of selecting as chancellor some person of royal blood or some nobleman of high rank. The prince consort himself was for many years the chancellor of Cambridge University.

The vice-chancellor thus came to perform the real duties of the office, while the chancellorship itself has become merely a post of great honor. So that now, while there is no emolument for the chancellor, the vice-chancellor, who is elected for a period of four years by the heads of the various colleges from their own number, is paid an annual salary of £650, in addition to the stipend of from £500 to £1,000, or even more, which he receives from his own college. Despite

this *honorarium* and the dignities of the office, very few vice-chancellors serve out their term, and the present incumbent is about to retire after two years of the arduous duties.

There has never been a more popular chancellor than the man who has just taken his seat. The Right Honorable George, Viscount Goschen of Hawkhurst, bears the stamp of nature's nobility upon his face, as clearly imprinted as is his patent from the late queen. He is a dignified, fine-looking man, well past the three-score and ten, with all the glory of old age and much of the vigor of youth. He has previously distinguished himself in politics, especially as chancellor of the exchequer under the Salisbury administration, and has pre-eminently the appearance and bearing of a British statesman. He is an "old boy" of Rugby School and an alumnus of Oriel College, Oxford; and while yet a student he distinguished himself alike for his brilliance in debate and literature, and for his genial, kindly, and sympathetic nature.

His election to the headship of Oxford was unanimous and has met with almost universal approval. Some of Lord Rosebery's friends, indeed, nominated that statesman for the post, but, upon being reminded of his escapades in college, at length prudently withdrew his name. Rosebery himself, however, acted in a most manly way and wrote his supporters, congratulating them and Oxford "on the election of so brilliant a son of Alma Mater as Lord Goschen, who had rendered her such special services in the past."

The appearance of the new chancellor, preceded by his "bedels" with their batons, and followed by two young pages, was the signal for the wildest applause. After him in the procession came Dr. Paget, lord bishop of Oxford, who is an intellectual, but most ascetic, person, in appearance; the heads of the different colleges, who are called "warden," "rector," "master," "dean," "provost," "principal" or "president," according to the tradition of each college; and then other men of distinction. The chancellor took the throne in the center of the rostrum, flanked by the two proctors, while the heads seated themselves in an arc about him, arranged in groups according as they possessed the doctorate in divinity, letters, science, or laws. During the hour preceding the ceremonies, Dr. J. Varley Roberts, organist of Magdalen College, had rendered a magnificent program from Handel,

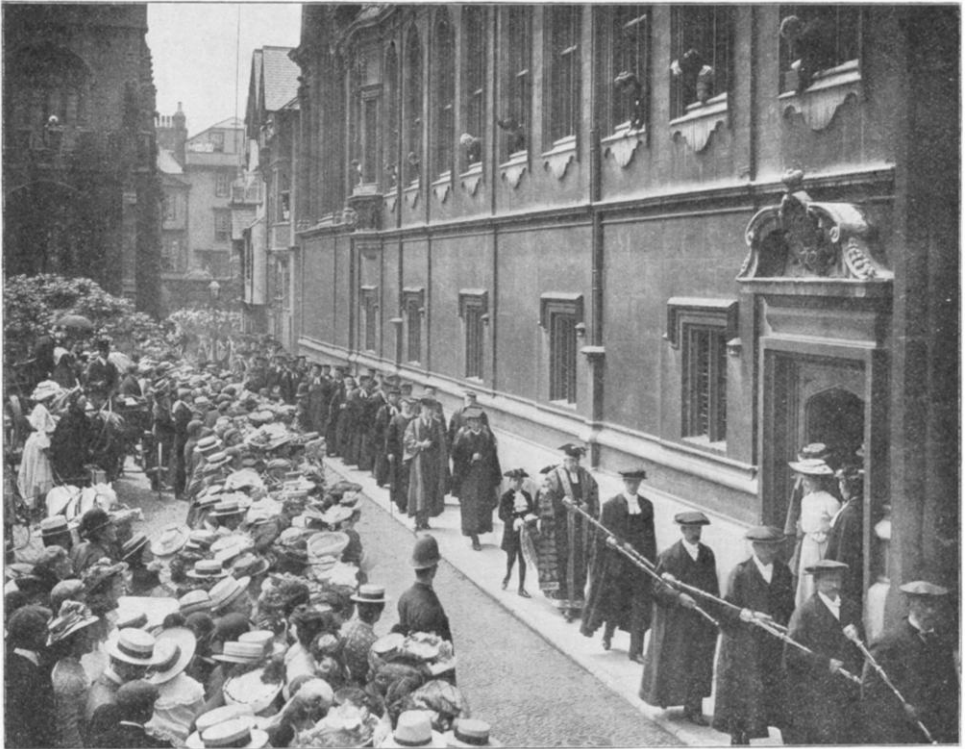
Mendelssohn, and Bach, and just before the appearance of the bedels, who were ushering in the procession, he started "God Save the King," into which all the students present entered with their usual vim.

The chancellor, in the Latin tongue, declared the convocation of the university open, and without more ado formally proposed that honorary degrees be conferred upon certain distinguished persons. As the name of each man was reached in cataloguing his merits, the proctors, who are two officers selected by the colleges in rotation to represent their authority, lifted their mortar-boards as a sign of assent. It was the refusal to give this consent that Cecil Rhodes had feared in 1899. The mere reading of the names and records of the recipients of degrees occupied nearly half an hour, as there were thirty-seven distinguished persons to be honored.

Although the chancellor has always had the reputation of being a very fine speaker, he at first appeared quite nervous in his new office. He trembled visibly and rattled the paper from which he read his Latin. But as the applause increased, he soon warmed up to the task, and while he occasionally omitted, mispronounced, or repeated a word, his utterance was clear and firm and he was almost free from his manuscript. His ability to extemporize in Latin brought to mind by contrast a certain distinguished university president of this country, who forgot a part of his "piece" at one commencement, and gave it in English, saying, with great unction: "Latin comes from the head, but English from the heart."

A more distinguished set of men was never given degrees. While most of those honored were from various parts of Great Britain, the number included also one Frenchman, one American, and two Italians. The doctors of civil law were *M. Paul Cambon*, the French ambassador to Great Britain, who this year, with the British minister of foreign affairs, signed the treaty which declared the *entente cordiale* between the two nations; the retiring vice-chancellor of the university, *David Binning Munro*, a most distinguished Latinist, albeit a very unprepossessing man in appearance; the new archbishop of Canterbury, *Dr. Davidson*; the bishop of Worcester, *Dr. Gore*, who has long been a prominent man of letters; *Lord Baljour, of Burleigh*, who has been secretary for Scotland and done much to produce the excellent educational system of that country; *Lord Tennyson*, the son of the famous

bard and a poet of no mean ability himself, as well as a man of action, having been governor of South Australia and acted as governor-general of the entire commonwealth of the island continent; *Lord Curzon*, the viceroy of India; *Mr. Gully*, the speaker of the House of Commons and a parliamentarian of great strength, who was obliged



THE COMMEMORATION PROCESSION PASSING BRASENOSE COLLEGE

Following the bedels comes the new chancellor, Lord Goschen, with pages; next, the bishop of Oxford; and after him the heads of the various colleges and the newly made doctors of law, science, and letters.

to ask permission of the House to be absent for a day at Oxford and to substitute the deputy speaker; *Mr. Asquith*, the secretary of state for home affairs in Lord Rosebery's cabinet, and a political enemy, though personal friend, of the present prime minister; *Mr. George Wyndham*, the chief secretary for Ireland, and lord rector of Glasgow

University; *Sir Richard Henn Collins*, the Master of the Rolls, one of the arbitrators on the Venezuela boundary question, and a man of considerable eloquence; *Admiral Richards*, who superintended the naval side of the conquest of Burmah, and has done much for the up-building of the British navy; *Lieutenant-General French*, who was the chief cavalry leader in South Africa; *Professor Villari*, the greatest living Italian historian and formerly minister of public instruction in Italy; *John Singer Sargent*, the noted artist; and *Charles Booth*, an enterprising and public-spirited shipowner, who has written much on social questions, and was lately made a member of the King's Privy Council.

Those presented for the doctorate in science were *Charles Algernon Parsons*, the noted authority on marine engineering; *Guglielmo Marconi*, of wireless-telegraphy fame, who sent the measure for his new doctor's gown from the middle of the Atlantic; *Sir William Church*, president of the College of Royal Physicians; *Sir Andrew Noble*, vice-chairman of the Elswick Works, and an authority on explosives and gunnery; *Sir William Crookes*, inventor of the vacuum tube that bears his name; *Sir David Gill*, the well-known astronomer, in charge of the Royal Observatory at the Cape of Good Hope; *Sir John Murray*, one of the scientists on the Challenger; *Professor Marshall*, probably the greatest living economist; *Joseph J. Thomson*, professor of experimental physics at Cambridge, the author of numerous works, and the founder of a school of research on radio-activity; *Horace Lamb*, professor of mathematics in the Victoria University at Manchester; *Professors Forsyth* and *Larmor*, the mathematicians of Cambridge and authors of many memoirs and treatises; and *Professor Dewar*, of the chemistry department at Edinburgh.

The doctorate in letters was bestowed upon *Lord Reay*, president of the British Academy and of the Royal Asiatic Society, who has also held many important educational posts; *Sir Spencer Walpole*, formerly governor of the Isle of Man and author of a new history of England; *William D. Howells*, our own charming novelist and man of letters; *Professor Lewis Campbell*, of the University of St. Andrews, the famous Greek scholar; *William Lambert Newman*, author of a monumental edition of Aristotle's Politics; *Mr. Andrew Lang*, "the master of many tongues and themes," and one of the most graceful writers

of our age; *John Knox Laughton*, professor of modern history at King's College, London, and a writer of prominence on naval history; and *Dr. Waller Leaf*, the distinguished Homeric scholar.

Each group of doctors was escorted in separately by the five bedels, and was presented in a Latin speech to the chancellor by a professor in the same general field of scholarship. The doctors of laws were introduced by Dr. Goudy, the Regius professor of civil law, who proved a most efficient master of ceremonies. Dr. Love, professor of natural philosophy, and Professor Bywater, of the Greek department, who presented those who were to receive the degrees in science and letters respectively, were more inclined to be prosy and indistinct in utterance, and the ceremonies would have dragged considerably, had it not been for the "coaching" that was volunteered from the upper gallery.

The chancellor also replied in Latin to each presentation, beginning his address every time with *vir* and some superlative in the vocative, much to the amusement of the students. One of the more audacious "undergrads" finally growled out the word *vir* just before it was actually spoken by the chancellor, in much the tone and manner of the presiding officer himself. Some of the chancellor's superlatives, especially the *sapientissime* applied to Mr. Gully, also caused a titter of laughter and mild groans from the gallery gods.

The most popular recipients were Admiral Richards, General French, Mr. Booth, Signor Marconi, and Andrew Lang. British patriotism was aroused to the highest pitch over the presentation of the two warriors. In the case of the admiral the applause was almost deafening and lasted several minutes, breaking out again after the presentation, and a third time after the chancellor's speech. The admiral himself was a most striking contrast in demeanor to the stern, almost sullen, military hero who followed him. He seemed a veritable incarnation of the typical hearty old sea-dog, who enjoys his glass of grog and the sight of a pretty lass, as he sat down after listening to the chancellor's address, and smiled at the ladies and the young men in the balconies. It did one good to look at him.

Probably Marconi appealed to the students as being a young man like themselves, although the most conspicuous inventor of the day. His boyish appearance contrasted oddly with the gray beards around

him, as no one of the other recipients could possibly have been less than twenty years older than this young wizard, who is still under thirty.

Andrew Lang is fully as well known to us as he seemed to be among our English cousins, and he would probably have received the same attention, had the honor been conferred upon him by Harvard or Yale. He fully deserves it, according to the opinion of all readers of his translations or essays. It was, however, a trifle disappointing to see that our Howells was so little known, for, while the applause was distinct and cordially given, it did not last long. The *Atlantic Monthly* and *The Rise of Silas Lapham* must as yet be but names to many of our Oxonian friends.

In each case, after the address was given, the chancellor gave the right hand of fellowship to the new son of Oxford, and the proctors seated him in a place appropriate to his new dignity. No diploma certifying to the degree is given; the names of all who receive degrees at Oxford, whether as bachelor, master, or honorary doctor, are simply entered in the university book, with the date and other circumstances. It is only in our own beloved land that the parchment evidence of receiving a degree attains to such mammoth proportions—often in inverse ratio to the size and importance of the college that grants it.

Immediately upon the conclusion of the bestowal of the degrees, the public orator, without introduction of any sort, arose in one of the gallery rostra to give the Crewian oration, which is delivered each year “in commemoration of the benefactors to the University, according to the intention of the Right Honourable Nathaniel, Lord Crew, Bishop of Durham.” The speaker on this occasion was the talented Dr. Merry, rector of Lincoln College. He is well named, for it is rumored that he is the only man in England that can cause an audience to ripple with laughter at Latin jokes. He fully lived up to his previous reputation. In most elegant but simple Latin he expressed the pious wish that the old kings, queens, famous churchmen, men of affairs, distinguished soldiers, and poets, who had done so much for Oxford, might again visit the scene of their benefactions. He was a little in doubt, however, as to whether they would be recognized, and whether they would, in turn, know the university itself, with its new

curriculum, its museums, libraries, and laboratories, together with certain strange sights on the campus, such as the ladies, the college dramatics, the electric lights, and other things that have disturbed the former peace and quiet of the place. Finally, after touching upon certain interesting academic questions, the orator bade farewell to the deceased chancellor, Lord Salisbury, and expressed the confidence of the university in the newly elected head. He was applauded to the echo, as much for the sentiments as for the well-chosen diction of his oration.

The compositions in Greek, Latin, and English verse, and on an historical subject, which had won the four great prizes offered to students of the university, were then given from the two gallery rostra by their authors. They were all excellent, but largely of the same order that was so common at the colleges and universities of this country when the graduating class delivered its own commencement orations, instead of having a single distinguished speaker from outside the student body, as is largely done at present. While the Oxonians and the ladies who have friends among the prizemen still listen with breathless interest to these productions, people in general do not take them as seriously as formerly. After Dr. Merry had ceased speaking, the audience in the "area" began to thin out. As the prizeman for English verse recited in a most pathetic and appealing tone the line—

Pale priestess, dead, glorious, where art thou?

one of the irrepressibles in the balcony, under the pretense of entering into the spirit of the poem, gave vent to a most soul-racked groan, which temporarily demoralized the audience and almost finished the poem before its time.

At the conclusion of the prize compositions the chancellor dissolved the convocation with a single Latin sentence, and the organ began the recessional. The procession filed out in the same solemn order in which it had entered, through the Divinity School and on over to Corpus Christi College. The band struck up "God Save the King;" and the Encænïa of 1904, with its initiation of the new chancellor, had passed into the history of the famous University at Oxford.

FRANK PIERREPONT GRAVES.

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